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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CH](#) [RS](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU: FM BOT ON CHINA, TURKEY,
ENLARGEMENT, RUSSIA/UKRAINE, MIDDLE EAST, AND IRAN

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD M. SOBEL FOR REASONS 1
.4 (B AND D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a one and one half hour discussion with Ambassador Sobel on December 2, Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot laid out his priorities for the last few weeks of the Dutch EU presidency. Bot stated categorically that he will not lift the Chinese Arms Embargo, but predicted (again) that Luxembourg would. He claimed that getting a yes on Turkey will be the most important legacy of the Dutch presidency, but stressed that this will not happen unless Turkey signs the Ankara Customs Union Agreement protocol on Cyprus at the eleventh hour on December 17. He faulted the Commission for the lack of progress on Romanian and Croatian accession talks. With regard to Russia, Bot said Putin's debating skills during the U.S.-EU summit were impressive but worried that Russian great game thinking will continue to thwart closer U.S.-EU cooperation in Ukraine and other parts of the new neighborhood. The EU will remain engaged in Ukraine despite Russian pressure, but Bot expected a new election would likely produce the same (fraudulent) results. Bot is proud that he was able to bring Israelis and Palestinians together at the EUROMED conference and intends to stay engaged in the Middle East after the conclusion of the Dutch Presidency. Finally, Bot described the EU-Iran agreement as flawed, but better than nothing: half and egg is better than a shell. END SUMMARY.

CHINA ARMS EMBARGO: I WILL NOT LIFT

12. (C) Bot stated that the Chinese have stepped up the pressure to have the embargo lifted before the end of the year. He said he recently told Chinese Foreign Minister Li on the phone that I will not lift the embargo. (Note: This is the first time Bot has stated this categorically.) Ambassador Sobel asked about the language on a positive signal we understood would be included in the EU-China summit statement on December 8; Bot acknowledged that the statement would include language indicating that the EU was working toward lifting the embargo but would not go further. Bot denied that the statement would include any conditions on lifting, but stressed that the EU would appeal for action on Human Rights and make clear that the toolbox and strengthened code of conduct must be in place before lift. (Grinning, Bot said he told Li to blame the French if their refusal to make concessions on the toolbox prevented the lifting of the embargo.) According to Bot, Li said that the Chinese would ratify the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights soon, but did not want to do it with a gun to their heads.

13. (C) Asked about the current dynamic within the EU, Bot said that the Baltics had recently become more active in expressing their concerns about lifting the embargo at this time, along with the Danes, Swedes, and Czechs. Bot predicted, however, that the embargo would almost certainly be lifted during the Luxembourg presidency, probably in May or June 2005, in response to pressure from China and France.

TURKEY: I WANT A YES

14. (C) Bot told Ambassador Sobel that he is determined to get a yes for Turkey at the December 17 Council meeting, asserting that this is the most important thing he hopes to accomplish this year. He stated categorically that the Council decision will use the October 6 Commission report language on open-ended negotiations: the Austrians, he said, will not get what they want. On the other hand, Bot argued that Turkey must eventually agree to sign the protocol to the Ankara Agreement (effectively recognizing Cyprus) -- which he expected them to do at the absolutely last minute on December 17 or early December 18 (after midnight) -- or there is no deal. Bot passed this message to Turkish FM Gul several times over the past few weeks, he said, but Gul so far remained adamant that Turkey would not sign. Shrugging, Bot said that if that remained the Turkish position there was nothing he could do as this was non-negotiable; if Turkey did sign, he added, then Cyprus would come under enormous pressure to drop all other additional demands.

15. (C) Bot asked for U.S. assistance in convincing Turkey to suspend military operations in the Aegean, at least through December 17, as they were providing a pretext for Greece to agitate against Turkish accession. According to Bot, Turkish PM Erdogan had told him recently that he could not stop the flights because he did not control the military -- an assertion Bot found disturbing. Asked by Ambassador Sobel about a possible date for starting negotiations with Turkey, Bot said that it would almost certainly be late 2005; he noted that in public statements he sometimes added or early 2006 as a sop to the French, but did not believe it.

ROMANIA/CROATIA: BAD VIBES

16. (C) Bot expressed frustration with the slow progress on Romania and Croatia accession. Romania was not even close to accession, he said, largely because of its lack of progress on competition area; while Croatia's failure to hand over Gotovina to the ICTY was a serious problem. Bot said that he did not want the Dutch presidency to be remembered primarily for saying no to multiple candidates, and was talking intensively with the Commission to find a way to move forward.

RUSSIA/UKRAINE: PUTIN WINS ON POINTS

17. (C) In response to a question from Ambassador Sobel, Bot denied that the lunch discussion on Ukraine during the recent EU-Russia summit had been as contentious as reported by some. Bot stressed that Putin had been polite but tough and very well prepared. Compared to his own Prime Minister, Bot continued, Putin came across as a strong debater who could win on points but still fail to convince his audience because his premises were all wrong. Putin had argued, for example, that the EU should stay out of Ukraine just as Russia has, and suggested that Ukraine's ties to Russia meant it would never be a Western European state. With regard to next steps, Bot said that he had deliberately chosen to let Solana take the lead for the EU (despite pressure from the Poles to take a more active personal role) since the Commission was inherently less threatening to Russia than the EU presidency. Bot expected that the Ukrainian supreme court decision would lay the basis for either a re-run of the election or completely new elections, and speculated that the Russian line in the sand would be for the EU to recognize Yushchenko as a winner without one of these steps occurring first. In either case, however, Bot concluded glumly that the same forces that rigged the last election would probably do so again unless the West could come up with 25,000 monitors. While the EU had been relatively united so far, Bot doubted that consensus could be maintained over the long term if the cause appeared lost.

18. (C) With regard to the four common spaces, both sides agreed at the summit to set May 2005 as the target for concluding agreement, but Bot was skeptical that this would be achieved, especially with regard to external relations. Russia, he said, is still operating on the basis of 19th century Great Game thinking, while the EU is trying to be a good neighbor.

MIDDLE EAST: STAYING IN THE PICTURE

19. (C) Bot confirmed that the Shaath-Shalom-Bot meeting on the margins of the November 29 EUROMED meetings had been very constructive. Bot had told both parties that the EU would refrain from discussing final status issues provided they made a real commitment to successful Palestinian elections and related near-term steps. (In response to a question from the Ambassador, Bot said that he had restrained Solana and some Arab delegations from seeking to restart a discussion on final status issues during the dinner by spelling out this agreement.) The mood of that meeting had helped set a positive tone for the dinner, which Bot contrasted favorably to the previous EUROMED dinner in which soup and plates flew. The EU is committed to providing funds, logistical support, and observers for the Palestinian elections but is also seeking support from countries in the region.

110. (C) Bot was eager to coordinate EU efforts with the U.S. and expressed frustration that more information on U.S. near-term planning was not available. He did not think he would be able to attend the December 11 Forum for the Future meeting in Rabat because he would be attending Prince Bernhard's funeral, but stressed that he intended to remain engaged on the Middle East even after the end of the Dutch EU presidency. (Note: On December 3, Bot told the Ambassador he would like to attend the Forum for the Future and intended to ask the Prime Minister if he could be excused from the funeral, but stressed that the Prime Minister was unlikely to approve.) Both the Palestinians and Israelis, he said,

appreciated the Netherlands' balanced approach (especially when compared to some other European governments) and had asked him to stay involved. Bot said he had discussed this with his Luxembourg counterpart who also supported leaving much of this portfolio in Dutch hands. describing his commitment to

IRAN: HALF AN EGG BETTER THAN A SHELL

11. (C) Ambassador Sobel asked Bot if he thought the EU-3 agreement with Iran would hold; Bot replied in the affirmative. He readily acknowledged that the agreement was not perfect, but noted that China had made clear its intention to veto any critical resolution in the Security Council, so that route was not practical. Citing a Dutch proverb, Bot argued that half an egg is better than a whole shell. The agreement would at least slow down the Iranians, he said, and could lead to a more significant IAEA monitoring regime in the future.

COMMENT:

12. (C) Bot was confident and decisive throughout the meeting. Although still looking for consensus within the EU, he also appeared comfortable choosing -- when forced to make a choice -- a position in favor of the transatlantic agenda over the objections of EU partners, as in the case of China. His irritation with France was palpable; at one point, Bot told the Ambassador in confidence that it would be a big mistake to reward Chirac's behavior with a presidential visit or other post-election gesture without guaranteed deliverables.
RUSSEL